Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claim 1 (currently amended): An autonomous response method, comprising:

autonomously updating a statement-response database <u>with a learned response</u>;

autonomously updating a context database with at least one real-world context element selected from the group consisting of a score in a sporting contest, a value of a market index, a value of a commodity, a result of a poll and a result of a survey, or some combination thereof;

<u>using one or more of said context elements to generate a learned mood number (M_l)</u> <u>indicative of the mood number at the time of obtaining the learned response;</u>;

<u>automatically associating said learned mood number with said learned response;</u>

~~autonomously generating a natural language response to a received~~ <u>receiving a</u> natural language input [[,]];

<u>automatically obtaining current values of said context elements corresponding to those used in generating said learned mood number;</u>

<u>using said current values of said context elements to generate a current mood number (M_c); and,</u>

~~wherein said~~ <u>automatically</u> generating a response ~~comprises~~ <u>comprising:</u> following a conversation strategy, ~~choosing at least one real-world~~ <u>context element from said context database using said</u> and searching said updated statement-response database using said <u>current mood number</u> ~~at least one context element~~ to select a response <u>that is both appropriate to said query and has the learned mood number</u> <u>most closely matched to said current mood number.</u>

Claim 2 (original): The method of claim 1 in which said autonomously updating comprises:

autonomously downloading publication content that matches at least one search criteria from an online publication formatted to be in human readable form;

converting said downloaded publication content into at least one entry suitable for use in said statement-response database; and,

storing said at least one entry in said statement-response database.

Claim 3 (original): The method of claim 1 in which said autonomously updating comprises:

autonomously acquiring an information stream from an audio-visual program presented in human accessible form, wherein said program matches at least one program search criteria;

transforming said information stream into at least one entry suitable for use in said statement-response database; and,

storing said at least one entry in said statement-response database.

Claim 4 (original): The method of claim 1, in which said statement-response database includes at least one ranked-list of response entries appropriate to a statement.

Claim 5 (original): The method of claim 1, in which said statement-response database includes at least one ranked-list of response entries related to prior conversations with a specific user.

Claim 6 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, in which said autonomously generating a response to a natural language query further comprises: receiving said query as an electronic character stream; parsing said query into a statement; generating a plurality of candidate responses appropriate to said statement by searching said statement-response database; choosing a best response from said candidate responses using said conversation strategy and said at least one context element taken from said context database; outputting said best response as an electronic character stream.

Claim 7 (previously presented): The method of claim 1, in which said autonomously generating a response to a natural language query further comprises: receiving an input audio signal corresponding to a human voice representation of said query; converting said input audio signal into a query represented by an electronic character stream; parsing said query into a statement; generating a plurality of candidate responses appropriate to said statement

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by searching said statement-response database; choosing a best response from said candidate responses using said conversation strategy and said at least one context element taken from said context database; generating an electronic character stream representing a natural language version of said best response; and, converting said electronic character stream into a synthetic speech signal corresponding to an audible version of said best response.

Claim 8 (canceled)

Claim 9 (original): The method of claim 1, in which said conversation strategy comprises: negotiating an identity of a current enquirer; negotiating a meaning of a current query; and, negotiating a conclusion to a current conversation.

Claim 10 (original): The method of claim 1, in which said conversation strategy comprises: scoring said query by assessing the level of language use in said query input to provide a metric of query sophistication; generating at least two candidate responses appropriate to said query; scoring said at least two candidate responses by assessing the level of language use in said candidate responses to provide a metric of response sophistication for each candidate response; choosing said candidate response having said metric of repose sophistication that most closely matches said metric of query sophistication.

Claim 11 (currently amended): An autonomous response apparatus, comprising: a processor capable of:

autonomously updating a statement-response database <u>with a learned response</u>;

autonomously updating a context database with at least one real-world context element selected from the group consisting of a score in a sporting contest, a value of a market index, a value of a commodity, a result of a poll and a result of a survey, or some combination thereof;<u>_</u>

<u>using one or more of said context elements to generate a learned mood number (M_1)</u> <u>indicative of the mood number at the time of obtaining the learned response;</u>

<u>automatically associating said learned mood number with said learned</u> <u>response;</u>

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~~autonomously generating a natural language response to a received~~ <u>receiving a</u> natural language input [[,]];

<u>automatically obtaining current values of said context elements corresponding to those used in generating said learned mood number;</u>

<u>using said current values of said context elements to generate a current mood number (M_c); and,</u>

~~wherein said~~ <u>automatically</u> generating a response ~~comprises~~ <u>comprising:</u> following a conversation strategy, ~~choosing at least one real world context element from said context database using said~~ <u>and</u> searching said updated statement-response database using said current mood number ~~at least one context element~~ to select a response <u>that is both appropriate to said query and has the learned mood number</u> most closely matched to said current mood number.

Claim 12 (original): The apparatus of claim 11 in which said in which said processor is further capable of: autonomously downloading publication content that matches at least one search criteria from an online publication formatted to be in human readable form; converting said downloaded publication content into at least one entry suitable for use in said statement-response database; and, storing said at least one entry in said statement-response database.

Claim 13 (original): The apparatus of claim 11 in which said processor is further capable of autonomously updating, comprising: autonomously acquiring an information stream from an audio-visual program presented in human accessible form, wherein said program matches at least one program search criteria; transforming said information stream into at least one entry suitable for use in said statement-response database; and, storing said at least one entry in said statement-response database.

Claim 14 (original): The apparatus of claim 11, in which said statement-response database includes at least one ranked-list of response entries appropriate to a statement.

Claim 15 (canceled)

Claim 16 (original): The apparatus of claim 11, in which said processor is further capable of generating a response to a natural language query comprising: receiving said query as an electronic character stream; parsing said query into a statement; generating a plurality of candidate responses appropriate to said statement by searching said statement-response database; choosing a best response from said candidate responses using said conversation strategy and said at least one context element taken from said context database; outputting said best response as an electronic character stream.

Claim 17 (original): The apparatus of claim 11, in which said processor is capable of generating a response to a natural language query further comprising: receiving an input audio signal corresponding to a human voice representation of said query; converting said input audio signal into a query represented by an electronic character stream; parsing said query into a statement; generating a plurality of candidate responses appropriate to said statement by searching said statement-response database; choosing a best response from said candidate responses using said conversation strategy and said at least one context element taken from said context database; generating an electronic character stream representing a natural language version of said best response; and, converting said electronic character stream into a synthetic speech signal corresponding to an audible version of said best response.

Claim 18 (canceled)

Claim 19 (original): The apparatus of claim 11, in which said processor is further capable of a conversation strategy comprising: negotiating an identity of a current enquirer; negotiating a meaning of a current query; and, negotiating a conclusion to a current conversation.

Claim 20 (original): The apparatus of claim 11, in which said processor is further capable of a conversation strategy comprising: scoring said query by assessing the level of language use in said query input to provide a metric of query sophistication; generating at least two candidate responses appropriate to said query; scoring said at least two candidate responses by assessing the level of language use in said candidate responses to provide a metric of response sophistication for each candidate response; choosing said candidate response having

said metric of repose sophistication that most closely matches said metric of query sophistication.

Claim 21 (canceled):

Claim 22 (new): An autonomous response method, comprising:

autonomously updating a context database, said context database containing one or more context elements selected from the group consisting of a score in a sporting contest, a value of a market index, a value of a commodity, a result of a poll and a result of a survey, or some combination thereof;

using one or more of said context elements to generate a learned mood number (M_l);

automatically updating a statement-response database, said updating including associating and storing said learned mood number with said response;

receiving a natural language query;

automatically generating at least two possible responses to said natural language query;

automatically obtaining current values of said context elements corresponding to those used in generating said learned mood number;

using said current values of said context elements to generate a current mood number (M_c);

automatically weighting said possible responses using said learned mood value stored with said response and said current mood value using the formula:

weight $= 1/(1 + C|(M_c) - (M_l)|)$, where C is a constant related to a suitability of said possible response and | | indicates the absolute difference between the current and learned mood values; and,

automatically selecting said lowest weighted response to generate a natural language response to said natural language query.